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Hampton Falls' Prime Wetlands Designation

West Environmental Inc.

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Hampton Falls' Prime Wetlands Designation

A NHEP Community Technical Assistance Project

Final Report

August 5, 2008

Abstract

West Environmental Inc staff (WEI) worked with Hampton Falls Conservation Commission to prepare a zoning amendment to designate 10 Prime Wetlands in the town, totally 1,270.8 acres. The amendment was approved by the citizens of Hampton Falls at the March 2008 town vote and WEI compiled and submitted the Prime Wetlands Designation application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services on August 4, 2008.

Overview

West Environmental Inc staff (WEI) worked with Hampton Falls Conservation Commission to prepare the town's Prime Wetlands Designation (PWD) zoning amendment for town vote and the PWD submission to the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). WEI reviewed the 2006 Prime Wetland Inventory Report that was prepared by Gove Environmental Services (GES) and met with GES staff to review wetland mapping methodology. After analyzing the GES reports, WEI determined that an additional six wetlands were eligible for Prime Wetlands Designation and reported this information to the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission. The Commission decided to pursue PWD for all 10 eligible wetlands. WEI worked with the Rockingham Planning Commission to create tax maps overlaid with the 10 candidates for PWD (Appendix A). WEI assisted the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission in preparing the zoning amendment for town vote and outreach materials to the town citizens (Appendix B and C). WEI attended numerous meetings during this project, including four strategy meetings with the Conservation Commission, one with the Planning Board and a public hearing attended by members of both boards and interested citizens. The zoning amendment was approved during the March 2008 town vote. WEI compiled the PWD package and submitted it for acceptance by NHDES on August 4, 2008 (Appendix D).

Prime Wetlands Zoning Amendment with Vote Tally

ARTICLE III SECTION 8 - WETLANDS CONSERVATION DISTRICT		
8.2 Definitions and Boundaries of Wetlands Conservation District		
8.2.4 Prime Wetlands		
<p>In conjunction with the definition of wetlands in Section 8.2, the Town of Hampton Falls has also delineated a special classification of wetlands referred to as Prime Wetlands, in accordance with the requirements of RSA 482-A:15 and Chapter Env-Wt 700 of the NHDES Wetlands Bureau Administrative Rules authorizing such designation. The boundaries of Prime Wetlands located in Hampton Falls are illustrated on tax map dated October 2007, along with an accompanying report entitled <u>Prime Wetland Inventory Report, Hampton and Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, February 2006</u>, which identifies the important values and critical functions that are provided by these wetlands. The Prime Wetland map and report are on file at the Hampton Falls Town Offices.</p>		
Ten Prime Wetlands Complexes		
1	Dodge Ponds Complexes	73.5 acres
2	Grapevine Run Complex	40.7 acres
3	Grapevine Run Headwaters	113 acres
4	Hampton Falls River Complex	40.5 acres
5	Hampton Falls Salt Marsh	
6	Taylor River Complex (Central)	244.9 acres
7	Taylor River Complex (West)	221.4 acres
8	Taylor River Headwaters Complex	141.5 acres
9	The Cove Complex	186.9 acres
10	Winkley Brook Complex	208.4 acres
<p>(Adoption of the Prime Wetlands article does not change the current wetlands setback requirements which were approved by Hampton Falls' voters on March 8, 1988. Proposed Article III recognizes that there are ten prime wetlands in town of substantial significance due to their size, unspoiled character, fragile conditions or other relevant factors. This designation enables the town to protect these water resources.)</p>		
<p>Recommended by the Planning Board Majority vote required</p>		

YES ⁴³⁰
NO ¹⁵⁹

Hampton Falls, NH Prime Wetlands

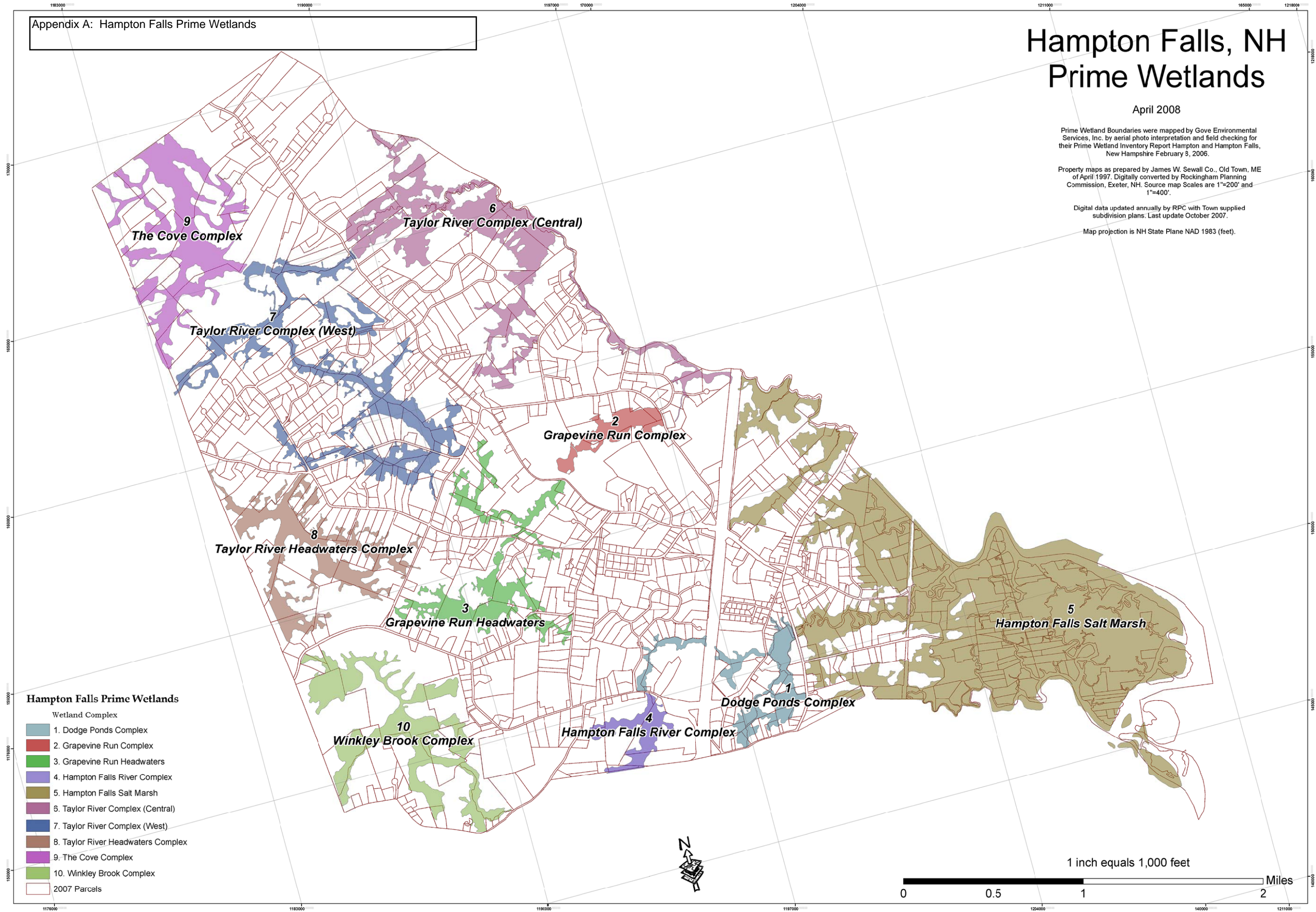
April 2008

Prime Wetland Boundaries were mapped by Gove Environmental Services, Inc. by aerial photo interpretation and field checking for their Prime Wetland Inventory Report Hampton and Hampton Falls, New Hampshire February 8, 2006.

Property maps as prepared by James W. Sewall Co., Old Town, ME of April 1997. Digitally converted by Rockingham Planning Commission, Exeter, NH. Source map Scales are 1"=200' and 1"=400'.

Digital data updated annually by RPC with Town supplied subdivision plans. Last update October 2007.

Map projection is NH State Plane NAD 1983 (feet).



Hampton Falls Prime Wetlands

Wetland Complex

- 1. Dodge Ponds Complex
- 2. Grapevine Run Complex
- 3. Grapevine Run Headwaters
- 4. Hampton Falls River Complex
- 5. Hampton Falls Salt Marsh
- 6. Taylor River Complex (Central)
- 7. Taylor River Complex (West)
- 8. Taylor River Headwaters Complex
- 9. The Cove Complex
- 10. Winkley Brook Complex
- 2007 Parcels

Appendix B: Outreach in Hampton Falls newsletter sent to every resident

November 2007 Hampton Falls Newsletter

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Prime Wetlands Initiative

Earlier this year the Conservation Commission (happily) reported that we were selected as a recipient for the New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) Community Technical Assistance Program. The NHEP provides up to \$8,000 of match-free grant monies to assist communities with fostering and protecting natural resources; the funds are used to pay qualified consultants to work with towns in pursuing these objectives. In our case, the application focused on protecting the Town's prime wetlands—those wetlands which provide the greatest overall benefit to our community.

By the time you read this, Mark West, president of West Environmental and our technical service provider, will have presented an overview of this initiative to the Planning Board. The next step will be to schedule a public hearing for Townspeople, which will cover the location of our Prime Wetlands and the significance of establishing a Prime Wetlands designation. We expect the public hearing will take place in late November, and hope you will attend this informational session with any questions or comments you might have (meeting notices are posted in the Town Hall, Library and Post Office; a notification of the hearing date will also appear in a local newspaper). In the meantime, should you wish to contact the Commission, please e-mail us at our newly created web address: hfcemail@yahoo.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

December 2007 Hampton Falls Newsletter

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Prime Wetlands Initiative

On November 27, 2007 the Planning Board held a public hearing to consider a warrant article that will amend Section 8, Wetlands Conservation District of the Town of Hampton Falls Zoning Ordinance to include 8.2.4 Prime Wetlands.

Mark West, wetlands scientist and president of West Environmental, discussed the Prime Wetlands initiative and stressed that it would provide greater protection for the highest value wetlands in Hampton Falls. Projects that are in or adjacent to these wetlands would not only be scrutinized through the local review process, but would also be reviewed by NHDES (<http://www.des.state.nh.us/wetlands/>). Wetlands designated as Prime Wetlands are considered to be the wetlands with the most significant values and functions. These wetlands are the largest wetlands in our wetlands system; they not only provide many services to our community in terms of aesthetic beauty and wildlife habitat, but also function to retain storm water and recharge aquifers. You will find a map of the proposed Prime Wetlands complexes overlaid on tax parcels at the Conservation Commission's link on the Town of Hampton Falls website (<http://www.hamptonfalls.org/>).

January-February 2008 Hampton Falls Newsletter

CONSERVATION COMMISSION Prime Wetlands Initiative

On November 27, 2007 the Planning Board held a public hearing to consider a warrant article that will amend Section 8, Wetlands Conservation District of the Town of Hampton Falls Zoning Ordinance to include 8.2.4 Prime Wetlands.

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The Conservation Commission is pleased that a motion was accepted to include Prime Wetlands in the upcoming warrant article. We encourage our fellow citizen to become informed about this proposal and to vote on this initiative on March 11, 2008. The Conservation Commission may be contacted through the following email address: hfcemail@yahoo.com.

Appendix C: Outreach mailed to every resident

Prime Wetlands: High Quality Wetlands



RSA 482-A:15 Prime Wetlands are wetlands of substantial significance due to their size, unspoiled character, fragile condition or other relevant factors.

Designated wetlands of exceptional value (Prime Wetlands) receive extra protection through State oversight, protecting water resources and wildlife habitat.

Are there Prime Wetlands on your property?

View the locations of the proposed Prime Wetlands Designation as an overlay on the Town tax maps by visiting the Conservation Commission web page at www.hamptonfalls.org. Hard copies are available at the Town Hall and the Library.

This map is only a guide. Site specific delineation by a State certified soils scientist will more precisely locate these wetlands when projects that could impact them are proposed.

Join us on Tuesday, November 27 at 7pm in the Town Hall for a public hearing to discuss the proposed Warrant Article designating Prime Wetlands in Hampton Falls.

For further information on Prime Wetlands visit the links on the Conservation Commission web page.

Hampton Falls Conservation Commission

Appendix D: Cover Letter for Prime Wetlands Designation Submission to NHDES



122 Mast Road, Suite 6, Lee, NH 03861
603-659-0416 ♦ Fax 603-659-0418 ♦ mark @westenv.net

August 4, 2008

Dr. Frank Richardson
NH Wetlands Bureau
50 International Drive, Suite 200
Portsmouth, NH 03801

RE: Prime Wetland Designation of Ten Hampton Falls Wetlands

Dear Frank:

On behalf of the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission, West Environmental, Inc. would like to request the NH Wetlands Bureau approve the Designation of ten Prime Wetland Candidates. The following documents are attached to support this designation:

- Prime Wetland Inventory Report Hampton and Hampton Falls, New Hampshire dated February 8, 2006 prepared by Gove Environmental Services, Inc.
- Hampton and Hampton Falls Wetland Inventory Final Project Data dated April 2008 on digital CD.
- Hampton Falls Prime Wetland Map dated April 2008 prepared by the Rockingham Planning Commission*

* These maps meet the criteria set forth in the NHWB Prime Wetland Regulations

The Hampton Falls Conservation Commission chose to designate 10 wetlands evaluated in the GES study ranging in size from 40.5 acres to the 1110 acre Hampton Falls Salt Marsh Complex. Although the GES study only recommended 4 wetlands, all 10 wetlands meet the qualifications for prime designation. The reason for the small numbers recommended in the GES study was the limited number of wetlands evaluated in the Town (10 in total). A complete evaluation of all wetlands in Hampton Falls over 2 acres would have resulted in recommending at least the 10 wetlands included in this designation. These wetlands represent the largest and highest functioning wetlands in the town.

Hampton Falls approved designation of the Prime Wetlands in their March 2008 town vote. The Town has shown a strong commitment to protecting wetlands in their community. They seek the support of the NHDES Wetlands Bureau to preserve the integrity of these very important wetlands for present and future generations.

This completes our submittal for your review. Please call our office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
West Environmental, Inc.

Mark C. West, President
Wetland Scientist

Cc: Town of Hampton Falls Conservation Commission (without attachments)